

CHAPTER VIII

OSIRIS AND THE MOON

BEFORE we conclude this study of

Osirrs It will be Osiris \\
worth while to consider an ancient
view of his nature, ?ometm

which deserves more attention than it has received¹ interpre
in by the
modern times. We are told by Plutarch that among
the ^moc
philosophers who saw in the gods of Egypt
personifications
of natural objects and forces, there were some who
inter-
preted Osiris as the moon and his enemy Typhon
as the
sun, " because the moon, with her humid and
generative
light, is favourable to the propagation of animals
and the
growth of plants ; while the sun with his fierce fire
scorches
and burns up all growing things, renders the
greater part
of the earth uninhabitable by reason of his blaze, and
often
overpowers the moon herself." -¹ Whatever may be
thought
of the physical qualities here attributed to the moon,
the
arguments adduced by the ancients to prove the
identity of
Osiris with that luminary carry with them a weight
which
has at least not been lightened by the results of
modern
research. An examination of them and of other
evidence
pointing in the same direction will, perhaps, help to
set the
original character of the Egyptian deity in a clearer
light.²

1. Osiris was said to have lived or reigned
twenty-eight

years. This might fairly be taken as a mythical
expression
for a lunar month.³

2. His body was reported to have been rent into
fourteen

pieces.⁴ This might be interpreted of the
waning moon,

¹ Plutarch, *his et Osiris*, 41.

384 sqq.

² On Osiris as a moon-god see E.³ Plutarch, *his et Osiris*, 13, 42.

A. Wallis Budge, *Osiris and the⁴ Ibid.* 18, 42. The
hieroglyphic
Egyptian Resurrection, i. 19-22, 59, texts sometimes speak of
fourteen

PT. IV. VOL. II

129

K